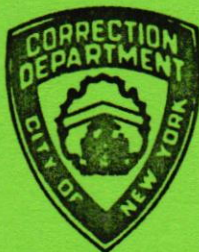


# SUICIDE PREVENTION



## A Guide for Inmate Suicide Prevention Aides

THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

BENJAMIN WARD  
COMMISSIONER

## SUICIDE PREVENTION

### A GUIDE FOR INMATE SUICIDE PREVENTION AIDES

What would you do if an inmate threatened to commit suicide?

Would you laugh it off?

Would you believe that the threat was just a joke or a way of getting attention?

Would you be shocked and tell him not to say things like that?

Would you ignore it and walk away?

If you reacted in any of those ways, you might be missing an opportunity to save a life. You might later find yourself saying, "I didn't believe he was serious," or "I didn't think he'd really do it."

During the past ten years over 80 inmates have taken their lives in New York City Jails. Suicide is one of the leading causes of death in prison.

As a Suicide Prevention Aide, you must frequently patrol your housing area and immediately report any unusual behavior to the Correction Officer in charge of your area. If an inmate you know is suicidal, your ability to recognize the signs and do something about it could make the difference between life and death.

### DANGER SIGNS

#### 1. A Suicide Threat

No doubt you have heard that people who talk about suicide won't really do it. It isn't true. Before committing suicide, people often make direct statements about their intention to end their lives, or less direct comments about how they might as well be dead or that their family and their friends would be better off without them.



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Suicide threats and similar statements should always be taken seriously. They must be immediately reported to the Correction Officer.

2. A Previous Suicide Attempt

People who have tried to kill themselves before, even if their attempts didn't seem very serious, are also at risk. Unless they are helped they may try again, and the next time the result may be fatal. Four out of five persons who commit suicide have made at least one previous attempt. Any suicide attempt, no matter how minor, must be immediately reported to the Correction Officer.

3. Big Changes in Behavior

A person who suddenly acts very differently or seems to have taken on a whole new personality may be thinking of suicide. The outgoing person may become withdrawn and and unfriendly. The quiet person may become loud and conspicuous. When such changes take place for no apparent reason or persist for a period of time, it may be a clue to impending suicide.

4. Depression

The depressed inmate often loses interest in friends and activities. He may express feelings of loneliness, worthlessness, guilt, and sadness. He may not be able to sleep. If you observe these signs and suspect that the person is suffering from depression, report this to the Correction Officer.

5. Making Final Preparations

Making final arrangements is another possible indication of suicidal risk. These arrangements

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may include giving away treasured personal possessions, packing personal belongings, or planning a trip when you know he is going nowhere. If you observe an inmate making final preparations and you know he is going nowhere, tell the Correction Officer immediately.

### WHAT TO DO

If someone confides in you that he is thinking about suicide or shows other signs of being suicidal, get help immediately. Tell the Correction Officer in charge of the housing area that you have observed an inmate who needs help from the mental health staff because he may be suicidal. If a member of the mental health staff is on the housing area, tell them about the inmate.

In many cases, people who are suicidal refuse help. When you offer to help them, they may turn you down, or tell you to leave them alone. Don't give up. Talk to the Correction Officer about them. Don't be afraid of being disloyal. It is up to you to use your judgement to see that they get the help they need. What at the time may appear to be an act of disloyalty or the breaking of a confidence, could turn out to be the favor of a lifetime. Your courage and willingness to act could save a life.

### TALKING TO A SUICIDAL PERSON

It is important to remember that most suicidal people are torn between the desire to live and the desire to die. There are many ways to appeal to the desire to live. One way is to assure the person that someone wants to help. Another way is to suggest other courses of action. A third way is to demonstrate that someone cares. All of these things can help a person to change his mind.

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There are several other things to remember:

1. Stay calm
2. Show concern
3. Don't tell the person that suicide is a cowardly thing to do.
4. Don't dare the person to commit suicide in the hope that he will change his mind.
5. Keep talking. The longer you talk, the more likely it is that he will change his mind.
6. Don't be in a hurry. Tell him who you are. Tell him that you want to help. Ask him if there is any one in particular that he would want to talk to.
7. Emphasize the positive
8. Tell him that counseling is available
9. Tell him that he can be helped and that his problems can be overcome.
10. Don't make promises that you can't keep.
11. When the mental health people take over, tell him you will stand by in case you can be of further assistance.

MAN CUTTING UP! WHAT TO DO

1. If you see an inmate cutting up, stay put and shout, "MAN CUTTING UP, CELL NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_!"
2. You should not enter the cell without the Correction Officer. The man may still have what he cut himself with and may try to use it as a weapon.
3. Put the cleanest piece of cloth on top of the cut and using your own hand, press firmly on top



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of it.

4. If there is no cloth, use your bare hand.

MAN HANGING - WHAT TO DO

1. Stay put. Shout, "MAN HANGING UP, CELL NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_!"
2. When the gate is opened, get in, approach him face to face, lift him from under the behind, and keep him as straight as possible so the body does not flop around, while the Correction Officer cuts the sheets.
3. Ease him to the floor, lay him on his back, loosen whatever is tied around his neck.
4. Follow the instructions of the Correction Officer.

WHEN BREATHING STOPS

1. If the victim appears unconscious  
Tap the victim on the shoulder and shout, "Are you okay?"
2. If there is no response  
Tilt the victims head, chin pointing up. Place one hand under the victim's neck and gently lift. At the same time, push with the other hand on the victim's forehead. This will move the tongue away from the back of the throat to open the airway.
3. Immediately look, listen and feel for air  
While maintaining the backward head tilt position, place your cheek and ear close to the victim's mouth and nose. Look for the chest to rise and fall while you listen and feel for the return of

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air. Check for about 5 seconds.

4. If the victim is not breathing give 4 quick breaths.

Maintain the backward head tilt, pinch the victim's nose with the hand that is on the victim's forehead to prevent the leakage of air, open your mouth wide, take a deep breath, seal your mouth around the victim's mouth and blow into the victim's mouth with four quick, but full breaths just as fast as you can. When blowing use only enough time between breaths to lift your head slightly for better inhalation.

If you do not get an air exchange when you blow, it may help to reposition the head and try again.

Again, look, listen, and feel for air exchange.

5. If there is Still no Breathing

Change rate to one breath for every 5 seconds for an adult.